

March 16, 2020

Eligibility for Unemployment Compensation During the Coronavirus Crisis

Free help applying for unemployment compensation is available statewide through Philadelphia Legal Assistance by calling (215) 999-6910. This includes help filing applications in different languages. Hotline hours are:

- Monday 9 a.m.- 1 p.m.
- Tuesday 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.
- Wednesday 3 p.m. - 7 p.m.
- Thursday 3 p.m. - 7 p.m.
- Friday 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Legal aid offices across Pennsylvania provide legal assistance at no cost to income-eligible clients and may be able to help if your application for UC is denied. Locate your local legal aid office using the PA Legal Aid Network Program Provider list

<https://palegalaid.net/legal-aid-providers-in-pa>

How do I apply for unemployment compensation (UC)?

- Online at www.uc.pa.gov
- By phone at 1 888-313-7284 (telephone access will be very difficult during this crisis)

Regular unemployment compensation benefits:

- Up to 26 weeks
- Benefits from \$68 per week to \$561 per week depending on earnings
- Paid every other week by direct deposit or debit card
- Decisions come by regular mail

Federal Expansion of Unemployment Compensation (CARES Act):

- Additional \$600 per week “bump” in benefit (until end of July) on top of regular UC.
NOTE: The \$600 supplement is **NOT** counted as income for Medical Assistance (Medicaid) or CHIP. It is counted for TANF cash assistance and SNAP, however.
- The \$600 federal UC supplements, called “Pandemic Unemployment Compensation” (PUC) began being paid the week of April 12.
- Additional 13 weeks of benefits (until end of 2020), making a total of 39 weeks.
- Expanded coverage (until end of 2020) for
 - Independent contractors
 - “Gig” workers (Uber, Lyft, Grubhub)
 - Self-employed
 - Those without sufficient base year earnings
 - Applications for UC expansion benefits, called “Pandemic Unemployment Assistance” (PUA), are expected to be available at some point before April 20, 2020

Immigrant eligibility for unemployment compensation:

- Workers who are legally authorized to work in the U.S. can qualify

- UC is not considered in a public charge determination for those applying for legal permanent resident (LPR) status
- Online applications are available in Spanish
- Interpretation services are offered by phone

Special rules during the crisis:

- No waiting week
- No job search requirement

Almost anyone who has lost work due to the COVID-19 crisis should be eligible:

- Your employer laid you off or cut your hours
- You cannot work because you cannot get child care and schools/day cares are closed
- You cannot work because you are at high risk
- Your employer told you to stay home because you traveled to a country with a high rate of infection or you have symptoms, such as a cough
- You live in a county where the state has recommended or ordered mitigation efforts, like a stay at home order
- Your employer fired you because your employer required you to work in violation of current shut-down orders and you refused

You must file bi-weekly claims:

- File online at www.uc.pa.gov
- File over the phone at 1 888-255-4728
- Include wages earned that week including paid time off
- Keep filing bi-weekly claims even if you are found ineligible

Appeals:

- You can appeal any notice of determination issued from UC
- Send the appeal before the appeal deadline
- You can appeal by:
 - Email ucappeals@pa.gov
 - Fax
 - Mail (difficult now)

*Community Justice Project is a nonprofit legal aid program that provides
legal assistance at no cost to income-eligible clients*

SCRANTON 570-604-5195 • HAZLETON 570-582-5816 • READING 610-370-7459
PITTSBURGH 412-434-6002 • HARRISBURG 717-236-9486

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